

President Calls on Congress to Raise H-1B Cap

Cite as "AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 06020661 (posted Feb. 6, 2006)"

Excerpt from President Bush's 2-2-06 speech at the 3M Corporate Headquarters outlining his American Competitiveness Initiative:

"Now, in the meantime, there's another issue that I want to discuss right quick. . . . There are more high-tech jobs in America today than people available to fill them. And if that's -- so what do we do about that? And the reason it's important, and the American citizen has got to understand it's important, is if we don't do something about how to fill those high-tech jobs here, they'll go somewhere else where somebody can do the job. In other words, there are some who say, we can't worry about competition. It doesn't matter, it's here. Don't worry about it, do something about it. It's a real aspect of the world in which we live.

And so one way to deal with this problem, and probably the most effective way, is to recognize that there's a lot of bright engineers and chemists and physicists from other lands that are either educated here, or received an education elsewhere but want to work here. And they come here under a program called H1B visas. And the problem is, is that Congress has limited the number of H1B visas that can come and apply for a job -- a H1B visa holder can apply for a job at 3M. I think it's a mistake not to encourage more really bright folks who can fill the jobs that are having trouble being filled here in America -- to limit their number. And so I call upon Congress to be realistic and reasonable and raise that cap.

We'll educate our kids. That's the goal. Of course, we want every job that's ever generated in America filled by Americans, but that's not the reality today. In order for 3M to remain competitive, in order for this job base to remain strong, in order for us to be a leader in innovation, we got to be wise about letting kids come here who've got the skill sets needed to fill the jobs that help us remain the leader in the world."